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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 04 JERUSALEM 001355

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STATE PASS BBG  
STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD  
WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM  
NSC FOR ABRAMS  
CMC WASHINGTON DC FOR POLAD

JERUSALEM ALSO FOR ICD  
LONDON FOR HKANONA AND POL - TSOU  
PARIS ALSO FOR POL  
ROME FOR MFO

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PREL KMDR KPAL KWBG KPAO IS

SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (7/28): "Bush...seeks to achieve an agreement between Israelis and Palestinians in order to urge Jewish pressure groups to vote for McCain."

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Main Stories:  
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All dailies lead with news about the launching of a Palestinian national dialogue in Cairo under Egyptian sponsorship on July 27. Al-Quds quotes the Palestinian Authority President, Abu Mazen, as saying "we [Palestinians] will continue the [internal] negotiations even if the chance of success is only 1%" and reports that Abu Mazen agrees with Egyptian President, Hosni Mubarak, about inviting all Palestinian factions for talks in Cairo. Al-Ayyam reports that Abu Mazen and Mubarak have discussed the latest developments in the negotiations with Israel and the truce in the Gaza Strip. All the dailies report that in a press conference held between the two presidents in Cairo, Abu Mazen denied accusations that Fatah was involved in the recent chaos in the Gaza Strip.

Al-Quds highlights news about the ongoing campaign of arrests of Fatah members in the Gaza Strip by Hamas. All dailies report that Hamas began this campaign against Fatah members on July 26, including incursions into Fatah offices and charitable societies. Al-Quds leads with a photo of Hamas security men checking a car in the Gaza Strip on July 27. In related coverage, all dailies report that on July 27, Hamas invaded the Gaza-based Media Development Center of Bir Zeit University and either destroyed or stole its contents. These actions are in response to the explosion which took place next to a car used by the armed wing of Hamas on a Gaza beach on July 25, causing the death of six people, including a child.

Coverage reports on continuing Israeli actions in the West Bank and Jerusalem. Al-Quds reports the killing of a Hamas leader in Hebron on July 27 by Israeli forces. In related coverage in Al-Quds, 15 Palestinian youths are reported as injured in clashes with Israeli soldiers in Ni'lin village near Ramallah on July 27, during a

demonstration against Israelis who were constructing part of the separation wall on Palestinian farmland. Al-Quds further cites a member of Ni'lin village as saying in an interview on July 27 that if the barrier is established on the remaining lands, 2500 dunums of Ni'lin's lands will be lost in addition to 1000 olive trees. He added that many farmers will lose their jobs on the lands from which they earn money. In Jerusalem, Al-Quds reports on the precedent-setting Israeli campaign of Palestinian house demolition. On July 27, the Jerusalem municipality reiterated its intention of destroying the five-storey house of the Palestinian Abu Eisha family in Beit Hanina. The Palestinian Prime Minister's Counselor for Jerusalem Affairs, Hatem Abdul Qader, warned on July 27 in an exclusive interview with Al-Quds against the Israeli demolition campaign against the houses of Palestinian Jerusalemites, and he called on all Jerusalemites to start a sit-in at the Abu Eisha house in Beit Hanina as of July 28.

Al-Quds covers the visit of a group of Palestinian negotiators to Washington on July 30 to discuss the developments in Palestinian-Israeli negotiations, as reported by the Palestinian Chief Negotiator, Dr. Saeb Erekat, in an interview with Palestine Radio on July 27. Erekat added that the peace process and the ongoing negotiations are facing a serious crisis and should continue without any obstacle, a reference to the latest Israeli settlement activities.

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Weekend stories  
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Sunday, July 27, 2008

The aftermath of the Gaza bombings dominates coverage in all Palestinian dailies. Describing Hamas' reaction and its crackdown on Fatah institutions in the Strip as an "unprecedented onslaught," and a "campaign of repression and arrests," the dailies ran lead headlines criticizing the Hamas security apparatuses for the haphazard arrests of dozens of Fatah members and the shutting down of PLO and Fatah institutions. The dailies highlight coverage of a statement issued by President Abbas' office, stating that despite Hamas' actions in Gaza and its "insistence on dividing the nation," President Abbas will continue his efforts to "ensure the unity" of the Palestinian Territories and "ease the suffering" of Palestinians in Gaza. The coverage cites another statement issued by the Fatah Central Committee bashing Hamas for the "destructive chaos" going on in Gaza. Al-Quds front-pages an AFP report quoting Palestinian analysts that the recent violence in Gaza will further deepen the division and tension between Fatah and Hamas. For their part, spokespersons for the Hamas government are quoted as saying that the real aim of the bombings is to spoil the "state of quiet and security that has prevailed in Gaza" in the past year.

Al-Quds front-pages an article underlining the "dismay" and "deep disappointment" of Palestinian leaders concerning remarks by Republican presidential nominee John McCain about Jerusalem, in which he reportedly promised to move the American Embassy to Jerusalem soon after he is elected. "The Jerusalem issue is bigger than the U.S. and all its nominees," says President Abbas' advisor Adnan Husseini, adding that the Palestinians "don't bet much on the American policy." The same article cites Ahmad Ruweidi, also of President Abbas' office, as saying that no American President has the authority to rule on the status of Jerusalem. For his part, Hatem Abdel Qader, advisor to Prime Minister Fayyad, is reported as saying that McCain's "unfortunate" and "dangerous" statement about Jerusalem reflects the nominee's attempt to "appease the Jewish lobby in the U.S."

Saturday, July 26, 2008

The series of bombings that took place in Gaza on July 25, killing at least five people---four Hamas militants and a 5-year-old child---lead coverage in all the Palestinian dailies. While Hamas leaders are quoted as accusing "external parties" of being behind

the attacks, front-page articles cite statements by the offices of the PA President and Fatah, stressing that the "mysterious" bombings were perpetrated by Hamas individuals as a result of infighting within the movement, and that Fatah has nothing to do with this violence.

Secretary Rice's statement that "there is still time for Israelis and Palestinians to reach a peace agreement by the end of 2008" receives front-page coverage in all dailies. Al-Quds cites the Secretary as saying that the upcoming trilateral talks in Washington between the U.S., Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA) should take place behind closed doors in order to offer the best chance for success. Al-Ayyam quotes Deputy NSA Elliot Abrams as "disagreeing" with Secretary Rice's optimism and instead expressing doubt about the possibility of forging such an agreement this year, citing Israeli PM Olmert's "weakness" as a reason. Abrams is further quoted as saying that the current Administration is focusing on ensuring a "smooth transition" of the negotiations file to the next American administration.

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Describing it as an "unprecedented" campaign by Israel to demolish Palestinian homes in Jerusalem, Al-Ayyam front-pages an article highlighting the Israeli authorities' issuance of a record number of demolition orders for Palestinian properties in several Jerusalem neighborhoods. Al-Quds and Al-Hayat Al-Jadida run the same story. The coverage also includes front-page stories about the Palestinian family Al-Kurd's efforts to save their home in Sheikh Jarrah from being taken over by Jewish settlers. In related coverage, Al-Quds front-pages a report citing a Ha'aretz story that the U.S. has officially raised an objection with Israel concerning the plight of the Al-Kurd family. In a separate article on page two, Al-Quds quotes State Department spokesman Gonzalo Gallegos criticizing Israel's intention to build a new settlement in the West Bank as "unhelpful." The EU's "displeasure" over Israel's announcement about the new settlement also receives front-page attention in Al-Hayat Al-Jadida.

Citing a report by the London-based Al-Sharq Al-Awsat newspaper, Al-Hayat Al-Jadida runs a front-page story that the Palestinian Authority is considering three options to deal with the impasse in the peace talks with Israel. The paper states that if Israel continues its settlement activities and the construction of the separation barrier, the PA may take the following three decisions by September: ceasing all contacts with Israel; unilaterally declaring a Palestinian state; and withdrawing all Palestinian security forces from the West Bank cities, while handing over the security responsibility of the areas to Israel. The article cites the PLO's Saleh Ra'fat as asserting that all these options are open and are being seriously studied.

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BLOCK QUOTES:  
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¶1. Al-Quds runs an editorial by Faysal Abu Khadra entitled, "Obama...and the Miracle of Israel" (7/28): "It is sad to hear and read that the African-American Senator whose father is a Muslim and whose mother is a white American Christian has a tendency towards [miraculously supporting Israel] rather than [supporting] justice ... As far as we know, Mr. Obama prays to and knows God and has called for the respect for the Islamic, Christian and Jewish teachings, but at the same time, he does not mention at all the Israeli violations against the besieged Palestinian people ... We [Palestinians] want to tell the Senator [Obama] who wishes to enter the White House with the support of the Jewish lobby that of all the peoples on Earth, it is the Palestinians who are the most connected to religion and to religious teachings. So, Mr. Obama should sympathize with the Palestinian people and approve of the justice that they deserve by alleviating the Israeli tyranny ... We [Palestinians] wish that the new American Administration would learn from history and give people back their rights because it is an illusion to believe that you [Americans] and Israel will win over the will of the Palestinian people, because this people learnt from the past and will not move at all from their and their grandfathers'

lands and the [Palestinian people] will achieve their rights no matter how long this will take."

¶ 12. Independent Al-Ayyam runs its daily editorial by Jawad Al-Bashiti entitled, "Rice's Optimism!" (7/28): "[The American, Palestinian, and Israel negotiators] still have enough time to reach a peace agreement by the end of 2008 if they are committed to the secrecy of the complicated and difficult negotiations going on in Washington,

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hosted by the U.S. Secretary of State Rice on July 30. This is what Rice said and confirmed regarding the Israeli-Palestinian-American talks that are to start soon ... If we suppose that the Bush Administration wishes to show off in its final days...its interest can be achieved if the two parties [Israelis and Palestinians] reach an agreement despite the short time left for Bush ...

[Moreover], this administration has an interest in employing all of its foreign policies to serve the presidential candidate McCain, and the [hoped-for] success of McCain over Obama is what makes the American Administration busy, especially Rice. This means that the Bush Administration seeks to achieve an agreement between Israelis and Palestinians in order to urge Jewish pressure groups to vote for McCain ... If the Palestinian negotiators do not succeed in making this paper agreement fail, then the Palestinians will be the losers ... [Therefore], Washington and July 30 are the worst place and time for the Palestinians to hold negotiations with Israel. These negotiations will not succeed...and will not fail...unless they serve Israel and the election campaign of McCain run by Bush and specifically by Rice."

WALLES